

27 September 1957

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. Robert Amorv, Jr.

Mr. Cord Meyer

FROM: S. A. Tidwell

SUBJECT: Attached Paper Entitled "America and
the Foreign Intellectual"

Here is an idea. It may be somewhat under-done at present, but I would like very much to get your reactions to it and talk about the problem further. If you are willing to do so, could you please give me a ring on extension

WAT:bpc

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America and the Foreign Intellectual

The competition for power and influence between the United States and the Soviet Union takes place at many different levels and in many different theaters, but in the last analysis the thing for which we are really competing is understanding and support on the part of the increasing group of intelligent and literate people, not yet fully committed to one side or the other, who lead opinion and political activity in large parts of the world. Although these people may be intelligent and literate, the great majority of them are not formally educated in the sense commonly understood in the West. Very few of them have the equivalent of a Western university education, and this lack of formal training has led many of these people to seek further knowledge haphazardly or in locally organized schools whose sponsorship and standards may be questionable.

Although the US has gone to considerable effort to describe its way of life to interested persons in other countries, there is no simple yet comprehensive statement of the well-meaning, liberal, and pragmatic approach of the West to the solution of world problems. The uncommitted intellectuals of the world do not need additional apologetics for capitalism or more detailed descriptions of the standard of living in the US, but they do need to understand the basic principles of Western life which govern our conduct and which in turn make it possible for the West to live successfully and profitably under a capitalistic and democratic system as well as under the various forms of modified socialism now in being in several advanced Western countries. Such a document is needed in English because English has become in many places the lingua-franca of the intellectual. Beyond that, however, it is important that such a document be available in all of the important vernaculars as well. No matter who many people there may be in a country capable of reading English, there are bound to be many more intelligent, ambitious and energetic people who can read only their native language. In many countries the mere learning of English might indicate an already existing pro-Western bias, or at the other extreme might tend to discredit the views of an English speaking person among the majority who do not speak English. We in the United States frequently fail to realize the extent to which the language barrier prevents intellectual development in other countries.

The need for a discussion of the fundamentals underlying the Western approach to life might best be met by a book devoted to a discussion of scientific method. Such a book would need to be prepared in simple language with readily understandable examples. At the same time it should cover all of the major aspects of scientific method in the West. For example, it should discuss the virtues and difficulties of inductive and deductive reasoning. It should describe the need for and problems encountered in preparing controlled experiments to verify the results of scientific reasoning. And it should explain some of the basic principles of statistics, together with some of the errors which a misuse of statistics can create.

In the minds of many people "science" and Western civilization are

synonymous. This is even true of those people who do not know what science is. It is true of a tremendous number of people who want to receive the benefits that Western civilization has brought to human welfare. Many people want scientific training without really knowing what it is, and the Communists have exploited this yearning for science by claiming that communism is "scientific" and that it is the one true way to achieve the benefits that science can produce.

This Communist tactic is particularly effective because science is widely regarded as being "objective". To pursue science does not indicate a bias and to follow a "scientific" course of action cannot, therefore, have evil motives. "Science," to most people, cannot have a propaganda content.

The Communist tactic is strengthened by the naive or biased scientists who follow scientific method in the laboratory but abandon it when judging political issues. Legitimate scientists who support Communist political activities confuse and mislead the layman who wishes to do the proper "scientific" thing.

What we need to do to correct this prostitution of science is to explain the basic philosophy and thought processes involved in science. We don't want to teach formulae, but we do want to teach the vigorous intellectual effort that leads to the development of formulae. A person trained in scientific method should be able to tell when a given line of reasoning is logical or not even if Harlow Shapely can't. In other words, we should be trying to teach the things that are common to physics, physiology, and political science — not the individual sciences themselves.

There is another advantage in selling scientific method. The US, being poli-lithic rather than mono-lithic, could probably never produce a formal statement of its political and economic doctrines that would pass Congress and not sound like pap to the very persons that it should attract. By teaching the thought processes that lie behind our system, however, we might make it possible for more people to understand us and the good things about us as well as the bad things about Communism.

A book on scientific method would have three major virtues in the competition for the uncommitted intellectual: (1) it would create a favorable picture of the objectivity of the West in its attitude toward world problems; (2) it would train the intellectual to discover for himself the fallacies in the pseudo-science of Communism; (3) it would provide an opportunity for subtle anti-Communist propaganda although great care should be taken to prevent the document from appearing to be an overtly anti-Communist propaganda effort. There follows an example — overly crude — but typical of the way in which the book could be used. In a discussion of logic the book might present an example of a false syllogism such as: (a) all Communists are bad; (b) Mr. X is a Communist; (c) therefore, Mr. X is bad. The explanation might then point out that this is obviously a false syllogism because the premise is incorrect, that although many Communists are bad there are also many well-meaning and intelligent

people among Communists who are Communists only because they are misguided, and that merely because Mr. X is a Communist does not necessarily mean that he is bad. This example would appear to uphold the objectivity of the book, yet cast doubt on the motives or sagacity of Communists.

There are probably several people in the US who could write an effective book on scientific method with the objectives outlined above. They would undoubtedly be able to contribute many more ideas on subject and presentation than the author of this paper can. It would appear logical to discuss this project with a number of intelligent and informed consultants, such as Max Millikan of GENIS. If it appears feasible after such discussion a formal project could be developed for submission to the Projects Review Committee.